

# **Whose Story is it? To Begin to Know**

**David Leser**

DCA

2017

**CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP**

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as part of the collaborative doctoral degree and/or fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Student:

Date:

# Acknowledgements

This DCA would never have been possible without the inspiration and cajolements of my supervisor Dr Sue Joseph. My heartfelt thanks.

My thanks also to Professors John Dale and Alan Knight who graciously took part in my confirmation.

My eternal gratitude to my former wife, Merran Morrison, our daughters Jordan and Hannah, my sister Deborah, my brother Daniel, my mother Barbara, and above all my father, the late Bernard Leser.

# Table of Contents

Abstract

<b>Part 1 A manuscript</b> .....	1
The desert places.....	2
A fateful meeting.....	15
Little Bighorn.....	38
‘This is not the fucking <i>Jerusalem Post</i> ’.....	69
And the band played on.....	89
You don’t have to be Jewish.....	125
Welcome to Gaza.....	146
Card game.....	156
<i>The journalist and the murderer</i> .....	176
To begin to not know.....	203
Fields of gold.....	217
‘So you think you can dance’?!.....	248
Lost illusions.....	264
The silence of an unborn life.....	289
‘Have you got a job yet, ya poor prick?’ .....	304
The night has a thousand eyes.....	323
<b>Part 2 The exegesis</b> .....	335
Introduction.....	336
Chapter 1 Context: my father and his story.....	344
Chapter 2 An historical and ethical discussion.....	354
Chapter 3 Two case studies.....	372
Chapter 4 Reflection.....	383
Chapter 5 Conclusion.....	407
Bibliography.....	411

# Abstract

This Doctorate of Creative Arts is in two parts: the first, a manuscript (now published; Allen & Unwin 2014) *To Begin to Know: Walking in the Shadows of my Father*; the second, an exegetical component *Whose Story is it: to begin to know*.

When I set out to write the manuscript, my father, Bernard Leser was still alive. In terms of the exegetical component, this was as professionally daunting as it was personally rewarding. Before he passed away, he read my manuscript, we negotiated sections, and he gave me his blessing. This took us both into a number of deep discussions around ethics, freedom of speech and ownership of stories. It is a tale that involves interrogating the depths of a hybrid memoir: his story and mine, with other family members also in the wings.

The exegesis is an attempt to position my memoir on an ethical spectrum, simply answering the question, whose story is it? It comes at a time in literary history when the subject of memoir and ethics has never been more polemical. My conclusion is that this is my story, but with important caveats attached, because no person's life is lived independently of others.